The Theology of Truth and Social Justice in the Present Context: An Examination of the Relevancy of the Kairos Document 30 Years after its Draft

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Abstract

This year marks 30 years since the final draft of the Kairos Document. The Kairos Document was drafted during a very tense political environment. The issues expressed in the document are still relevant in the current African context. There are many countries that are governed by what are perceived to be corrupt governments, and some are classified as failed states. The Kairos Document focuses on the attitudes of the churches under these hardships. Although it places the value of all human life on an equal platform and calls for the governments to govern in fairness and morality within God's moral law, its position on civil disobedience could be seen to lack adequate biblical foundation. In addition, its biased view on reconciliation does not achieve what it desires; a true and unified reconciliation.

[1] The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

1. Introduction

The Kairos Document was first drafted in 1985, and was followed by the second and final draft in 1986 in Apartheid South Africa during one of the most violent periods of the anti-Apartheid era, when the state of emergency was declared to try to maintain order (Eckardt 1986:218; Mtakati 2010:20–26; Vellem 2015:1). The tense situation caused black local churches to reassess their position in the struggle, as they were faced with the harsh realities of the day—even men of the cloth had to carry the 'dompas' (a pass book issued in terms of the Pass Law), and were also subjected to restrictions placed on all Non-White racial groups (Mtakati 2010:26). The Kairos Document was drafted by, mostly, those in oppressed and marginalised communities. The primary focus of the document is on the relationship between the Church and the state in a context where the state is seen as the oppressor and the cause of poverty and social injustice in the lives of certain groups of its citizens (Kairos 1985:368).

The Church found itself in a vigorous debate about the role of the Church in apartheid South Africa. Even after the publication of Kairos Document the debate still continued, resulting in the publication of Evangelical Witness in South Africa in 1986 and responses from churches in Europe. Webb describes this document as 'an example of grassroots theology born in the midst of bloodshed and death of increasing bitterness and polarisation, and of rising anger in the townships' (Webb 1986:5). For a long time the Church had understood its purpose solely to concentrate on its ecclesiastical duties and not be involved in politics. However, this had proved difficult, primarily for the churches in the black and other Non-White communities, as the evidence of oppression was real. This does not mean that there was disinterest from urban white churches; however, the black clergy were faced with pastoral duties in communities that were ripe with discontent

and suffering (Webb 1986:5). It is within this context that the authors of the document present a Church divided primarily along racial lines.

The underlining question that the Kairos Document seeks to answer is, what is the role of the church in a country where many lives are consistently lost or negatively affected due to the direct cause of state policies or acts of terror? This question is equally valid in the contemporary international context with much political turmoil in Africa and the Middle East, due to what has been termed the Arab Spring (Prashad 2012:6). Demonstrations and revolts are the norm in many states, all over the world, due to the challenging economic and political landscape. The question that has plagued the Christian community for centuries is what theological view should be adopted by the Church regarding obedience to the state? This question guided the Christian community during the Apartheid era in drafting the Kairos Document. The Kairos Document focuses on the issue of divine truth and social justice in connection with obedience to the state. This issue was paramount as the Apartheid system was deemed immoral, as was the biblical defence of the system by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) (Dyrness and Kärkkäinen 2008:54).

There are many issues expressed in the Kairos Document, such as poverty and its criticism of capitalism, but these should be interpreted within its context. More so as these issues will not be the primary focus, since poverty should be interpreted as state-induced poverty due to its policies, and the criticism of capitalism should be viewed as how it was practised by the Apartheid regime that sought to benefit only the few. However, from an evangelical perspective, if the Kairos Document should be criticised on its negative view of capitalism, it should not be done in favour of capitalism. Evangelicalism should not be based on any economic system. Both socialism and capitalism have been

ineffective in dealing with poverty and social inequality, and evangelicalism should not be associated with either. Thus the criticism should be based on whether or not the Kairos Document advocates socialism.

The questions that will be examined here are, what is the evangelical theological and biblical view of the relationship between the Church and the state and social justice, and does the Kairos Document adhere to such views? How relevant is the Kairos Document to the contemporary context, 30 years after its publication?

2. The Basic Layout of the Kairos Document

The Kairos Document begins with a critique of State Theology and its employment of Romans 13:1–7 and the concept of Communism, and a critique of Church Theology and its irrelevancy in addressing the pressing social injustice facing the black community (Kairos 1985:368-369). Second, there is a critique of Church Theology that argues against passivism of the church community and the notion that is plausible to conclude to adhere to the state's interpretation of Romans 13:1–7. The writers argue that reconciliation cannot be possible if the oppressive system still exists, thus once it is removed, then a journey to true reconciliation may be initiated. Third, there is what the Kairos Document calls the Prophetic Theology that attempts to present a picture of the context of the document and makes an argument against oppression, by depicting God as the anti-oppressionist and a fighter for the oppressed. It also attempts to bring a message of hope to the oppressed and assurance of freedom. Lastly, the Challenge to Action section calls for the Church in South Africa and abroad to act against injustices against the non-whites in South Africa. The document also calls for the support of both civil disobedience and even an armed campaign against the apartheid system.

The Kairos Document does not attempt to present a biblical justification for its position by starting with biblical exposition, and this could be seen as one of its shortcomings, particularly from the evangelical perspective. The writers' presentation juxtaposes the struggle between the oppressive government that is fighting to keep its laws to suppress the freedom of all its citizens, and the fight against good and evil, God and the devil. This sets the tone of the document as the language continues in the next section. Only in the third section do the writers, apart from their argument in the first section against the state's interpretation of Rom 13:1–7, present a more convincing biblical perspective on oppression. However, it is essential to examine the document and its arguments.

3. A Critical Examination of the Relationship between the Church and the State in the Kairos Document

As stated earlier, the Kairos Document presents a partisan church that is the division what the document calls the White and the Black Church.[2] According to Eckardt (1986:220) there are three approaches to apartheid. First is *the Pro–apartheid radicalness*: under this, the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK) and the majority of the Afrikaans and some English churches can be placed. This is what the Kairos Document calls State Theology (Eckardt 1986:220). The second is the *Christian spiritual approach*. This is the passive stance of the church where the denunciation ends only in theological disposition and statements, but no decisive action is taken. This is what the Kairos Document calls Church Theology (Eckardt 1986:221). The third is *Militant anti-apartheid Christianity*. Eckardt believes that the Kairos

[2] The churches that were perceived to be supporters of apartheid, and those that were supposed to be against apartheid.

Document belongs to this category. This deals with both the affirmation of public statements, while still acknowledging and accepting overt revolutionary praxis. Eckardt (1986:222–223) states that the document's classification of apartheid as a heresy is one thing, but a call for civil disobedience and revolution is something entirely different.

A question that arises is, should a call for civil disobedience and a call for armed struggle be classified together? It is my firm opinion that the three above-mentioned approaches given by Eckardt are insufficient, and that an addition should be provided to pro-Apartheid radicalness, Christian spiritual approach and Militant anti-Apartheid Christianity. *Peaceful civil-disobedience* should be added as a fourth classification, as distinction should be made between an endorsement of armed struggle and peaceful protest against unjust laws. Although I understand the motivation of Eckardt in placing the Kairos Document under the militant anti-apartheid Christianity grouping, it is essential to note that the advocacy of armed-struggle is presented at the last resort.

The classifications presented by Eckardt could be adapted to fit the general world context. The pro-Apartheid radicalness could be classified as *pro-state activism*. This is for churches that ideologically and actively support the state and its policies. An example of this group is the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) church commonly known as the Chinese state church. This is a church movement that supports the policies of the Chinese Communist Party. This church movement has been responsible for the persecution of the non-registered churches. According to the *Country Report on Human Rights Practices of 1997* (1998:156–157) the TSPM church movement aided the government in implementing a three-stage plan to dismantle non-registered religious movements, which saw many of the church leaders imprisoned or fined.

The second classification of Christian Spiritual approach could be maintained without any additional conditions. An example of the churches in this classification are the Syrian Christian churches. Najib Awad (2012:86), a Syrian national Christian theologian, states that Christians in Syria do not support the ideology of the Assad regime, but believe that the regime is the only barrier between peace and persecution of the Christian minority. Awad says that the regime does not protect the Christian minority, but that the stance of the church is pragmatic when the alternative of an Islamic state that may be oppressive to the Christian community is a possibility. Judith Rubin (2015:339), a respected Israeli academic on the Middle East, supports Awad's view and states that Syria has been a haven for Christians who escaped the massacres in Turkey during the First World War. The security was not due to a direct interaction with the Assad regime, but the secular nature provided by the regime is more favourable to Syrian Christians than the religious alternatives should the regime fall. Awad (2012:86) states that Syrian Christians are not involved in the conflict, but hope and pray for peace in the country and the region.

The third and fourth classifications are civil disobedience approach and militant anti-state tactics respectively. The former is an approach that could be associated with that of Bishop Desmond Tutu and Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. Hendrick Pieterse (2001:31) points out that civil disobedience during apartheid, and this can include other contexts where prejuduce was challenged on a national level like the American civil movement, was more than a tactic but a principle that guided the heart of the liberation movement. This is evident in the manner that leaders such as Desmond Tutu and Martin Luther King Jr conducted their movements and campaigns. For the militant approach it is difficult to point to any Christian church movements that embraced this approach as the sole solution to the social and political challenges

similar to the apartheid regime. Bettina Koch (2015:116–120) calls the churches that supported the armed-struggle the revolutionary churches; however, she concedes that these churches always saw the armed struggle as the only option after all peaceful means had proved futile. These four classifications are sufficient in judging many theological positions that any individuals or Christian groups may adhere to, regarding the appropriate and biblical way that the Christian community should react to a tyrannical and oppressive state. It is essential to establish what the biblical presentation is of the role of the state and the relationship between the state and the Church.

3.1. A biblical examination of the role of the state, and the relationship between the Church and the state

The Kairos Document contends that, '"State Theology" is simply the theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism, and totalitarianism. It blesses injustice, canonises the will of the powerful and reduces the poor to passivity, obedience and apathy' (Kairos 1985:368–369). It goes on to charge the state with misusing theological and biblical concepts and texts for its own political purposes. It gives three main charges; the use of Romans 13:1–7 to give an absolute and 'divine' authority to the state, the use of the idea of Law and Order to determine and control what the people may be permitted to regard as just and unjust, the use of the word 'communist' to brand anyone who rejects State Theology, and the misuse of the name of God in the South African Constitution, calling the document idolatry.

State Theology was a theology that sought to legitimise an illegitimate state, for it was a theology of the apartheid state that canonised racism, capitalism and a totalitarian state against the Black people of South Africa (Vellem 2015:2). To achieve this end, State Theology misused theological concepts and biblical texts, such as Romans 13:1–7. Some

will remember what was then called the Doctrine of Common Purpose that empowered the state to incarcerate without trial people who were believed to have pursued an agenda of undermining the state. Under this regime, even the meaning of 'a meeting' assumed a different definition. More than two people, for example, found standing at any corner of the street in the township would easily be detained, because meetings or gatherings were against the law of the apartheid regime. Law and order had become an aberration which resulted in the ubiquitous presence of the legions of the military force invading and hovering over almost every space of life in the township (Vellem 2015:1).

Eckardt's concludes the climax of judgment against State Theology, whereby the Kairos theologians equate the state's use of the name of God with the praxis of Satan, the anti-Christ in the following,

> This means that much more than heresy is involved. 'State Theology' is not only heretical, it is also blasphemous. As Christians, we simply cannot tolerate this blasphemous use of God's name and God's Word. Here is a god who exalts the proud and humbles the poor—the very opposite of the God of the Bible who 'scatters the proud of heart, pulls down the mighty from their thrones and exalts the humble (Eckardt 1986:224).

The Kairos document begins with the observation that throughout the history of Christianity totalitarian regimes have misused the text to legitimise an attitude of blind obedience and absolute servility by its subjects. This is echoed by Monera in the following,

> In the history of its interpretation, this passage has often been invoked, even grievously perverted, to support the political interests of the readers and interpreters. There are expositors that endeavoured to derive from this text of Paul the offensive principle of unresisting, unquestioning obedience to civil authority of

> whatever brand. No matter how tyrannical or immoral the rulers are, they ought to be obeyed and no resistance is ever lawful (Monera 2005:107)

According to the Kairos Document the apartheid state is guilty of the same crime, and one may argue that this use of the text was consciously and deliberately misleading (Kairos 1985:368–369). Many scholars have written on this subject and focused on the responsibility of Christians towards a tyrannical state, and many have called for proper exegetical tools to be employed when examining the text, and this notion is also what the Kairos Document supports. It states,

> To abstract a text from its context and to interpret it in the abstract is to distort the meaning of God's Word. Moreover, the context here is not only the chapters and verses that precede and succeed this particular text nor is it even limited to the total context of the bible. The context includes also the circumstances in which Paul's statement was made. Paul was writing to a particular Christian community in Rome, a community that had its own particular problems in relation to the state at that time and in those circumstances. But most revealing of all are the circumstances of the Roman Christians to whom Paul was writing. They were not revolutionaries. They were not calling for a change of government. They were what has been called 'enthusiasts,' and their belief was that Christians, and only Christians, were exonerated from obeying any state at all, any government or political authority at all, because Jesus alone was their Lord and King (Kairos 1985:369–370).

What is essential is to examine the role of the state and the role of the Christians regarding the state. First, I will examine Romans 13 verse 4.

θεοῦ γὰρ διάκονός ἐστιν σοὶ εἰς τὸ ἀγαθόν. ἐὰν δὲ τὸ κακὸν ποιῇς, φοβοῦ· οὐ γὰρ εἰκῇ τὴν μάχαιραν φορεῖ· θεοῦ γὰρ διάκονός ἐστιν, ἔκδικος εἰς ὀργὴν τῷ τὸ κακὸν πράσσοντι.

> For, indeed, he is a servant of God for the good. Moreover, if ever anyone practises evil he should be afraid, for he indeed does not bear the sword in vain. For, indeed he is a servant of God, an avenger of wrath to the evildoer.[3]

Paul uses διάκονος *(diakonos)* to describe the ruler or the state. *Diakonos* has three meanings: minister, servant(s), and deacon. *Diakonos* is understood as 'someone running errands, and doing the will of the master' (Bruce 1985:223–224). In the Gospels, Jesus uses *diakonos* in reference to a specific attitude that his disciples and all believers should have towards each other (Matt 20: 26; 23: 11; Mark 9: 35; 10: 43; Bruce 1985:223–224). In Matthew 20:25–26 Jesus contrasts the attitude of the rulers of the Gentiles and the believers. Jesus uses κατακυριεύουσιν (*katakyrieuousin*) meaning to exercise lordship over and κατεξουσιάζουσιν (*katexousiazousin*) meaning to exercise authority over the subjects in reference to the nature and the manner of governance that is unacceptable, and in contrast to being a servant as the acceptable and godly alternative.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus' use of *diakonos* is in a personal directive, as meaning the service of the believer to him (John 12: 26). Paul's use of the term in his epistle is often in reference to both allegiance to Christ, and service of believers in the Christian community. One Timothy 3 is the first time Paul personally uses the term, but in plural form, διακόνους (*diakonous*) in reference to a specific office within the Christian community (1 Tim 3:8). This is why many translations opt to use the word 'servant' rather than 'minister' (Bruce 1985:223–224). Therefore, governments are servants appointed by God to do his will.

[3] My own translation.

We will compare the translation of the term in the following translations; New King James Version (KJV), New International Version (NIV), English Standard Version (ESV), and New Living Translations (NLT).

> KJV: For he is the *minister* of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.
>
> NIV: For the one in authority is God's *servant* for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer
>
> ESV: for he is God's *servant* for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.
>
> NLT: The authorities are God's *servants*, sent for your good. But if you are doing wrong, of course you should be afraid, for they have the power to punish you. They are God's servants, sent for the very purpose of punishing those who do what is wrong.

With the government as servants of God, the primary focus is to;

- Do the divine will of God and uphold his Truth, moral law and social justice.
- Execute laws that reflect the personality of God and uphold righteousness among its citizens.

- Execute punishment on evildoers in society (Bruce 1985:223–224).

Bailey (2004:28) also supports this notion, as he observes that specific historical conditions could have prompted Paul to include the section on obedience in the paragraph. Bailey (2004) adds that just as nationalistic tendencies among the Jews created opposition to Rome, so the belief that Christians were citizens of a heavenly kingdom with their allegiance to Christ could have caused them to look upon government with a lack of respect, which potentially could endanger their continued existence. He continues by stating,

> Yet in spite of the fact that this paragraph may reflect historical conditions at Rome or elsewhere in the first century AD, the text is primarily an example of Paul's preaching on the general relationship of Christians to civil government. It does not deal with the problems that arise when human governments fail miserably at their divinely instituted responsibilities or when demands of government violate the conscience of a Christian. What it does provide is an example of Paul's political paraenesis. And the basic message is that Christians demonstrate obedience to God by submission to civil government (Bruce 1985:223–224).

Bailey's argument is that the text does not support the view of blind obedience to a tyrannical or oppressive state, but teaches general conduct and attitude towards civil government. This is supported by Dyck (1985:46) in stating that 'the obvious problem for the idea of the divine institution of all authority is the fact of evil government, which in the text seems not to be accepted.' Like Bruce and Bailey, Dyck (1985:46–48) argues that Paul's real task was not to encourage an exalted view of the state that requires absolute obedience, but to discourage rebellion. Like many others, Dyck looks at Paul's Jewish

background and the general attitude towards Rome, and observes that the rising tide of zealotry in Palestine could not have escaped Paul's notice. Although it may not be the background for this text, it may have made him more acutely aware of similar tendencies among other Roman subjects (Dyck 1985:48).

Towards the end of his work, Monera (2005:113) points out that although the passage is written in a somewhat general tone, it does not legislate for every conceivable situation in which Christians find themselves. Monera (2005:113) states that it is of limited value, albeit its principles can guide us in dealing with political problems that concern people today. Therefore, based on the presented argument I believe the use of Romans 13:1–7 in support of absolute obedience to the state is an error. The word error is used here consciously instead of blasphemous or heretical, as it is not directed towards the then, apartheid state, but focuses on the use of the scripture to advocate obedience. Motive and intent plays a decisive role in the determination of classifying something as error or blasphemous, and if a state uses biblical texts with deceitfulness knowing the real meaning, then the latter is appropriate.

Romans 13:1–7 can be paralleled with Titus 3:1, where Paul instructs Titus to remind the believers of their obligation to the state.

ὑπομίμνῃσκε αὐτοὺς ἀρχαῖς ἐξουσίαις ὑποτάσσεσθαι, πειθαρχεῖν, πρὸς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἑτοίμους εἶναι,

> You should remind them to submit to the rulers and be obedient to the authorities and be ready for every good work.[4]

[4] My own translation.

The New International Version, New King James Version and many others interpret Titus 3:1 as, 'Remind them [the people] to submit to the rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work.' Titus 3, although it can be paralleled with Romans 13, places the instructions in a uniquely different position from Romans 13. Paul wrote the letter to the Romans during his third missionary journey (AD 53–58) during the time when the main opposition to the Gospel message was the Jewish authorities (Gundry 2012:433). This was during the time of transition between the Roman Emperor Claudius (AD 41–54) and Nero (AD 54–68) when there was a time of relative peace for the Christians (Gundry 2012:32). The letter to Titus was written between AD 63 and 67. Commentators like Benware (2003:230) opt for the earlier date, while others like Polhill (1999:405) point to the later date, which places the letter in the time of Neronian persecution. If the later date of AD 64 to 67 is adopted, then Paul's instruction could be viewed as telling believers to remain obedient to the authorities during the time of persecution. This would apply to 1 Peter 2:13, which was written during the same period and gives similar instructions. Thus the instructions that continue in verse 2 of avoiding speaking ill of others and maintaining the attitude of gentleness and peace bear a deeper meaning if put in the context of extreme persecution by a tyrannical state. If Titus 3:1 and 1 Peter 2:13 were written during the time of persecution, the instructions expressed would contradict the nature of the Jewish zealots and other revolutionary groups that existed at that time. Paul and Peter, with their backgrounds, would have been familiar with the nature of the revolutionary groups in Palestine opposing the Roman occupation. The instructions given in these letters could be considered as counter-revolutionary in nature, as they discourage believers from taking stances that would cause public discourse.

The debate on the power of the state is relevant in the current democratic society. The power of the state is not divorced from God's divine Truth; rather it is to enforce the Truth and God's moral law in society while making sure that it is not in violation of it (Bruce 1985:223–224). However, in a situation where a state is in violation of its obligation to God and its citizens, there is a lack of biblical mandate for believers to react against the state; rather, they ought to conduct themselves with gentleness, humility, and godliness. This does not mean that the Church has to promote ungodly legislatures. If I have to place the instructions expressed in Romans 13:1–7, Titus 3:1 and 1 Peter 2:13, under one of the four classifications I mentioned earlier, they will fall under Christian Spiritual approach that encourages dialogue, prayer and practical Christian spirituality rather than civil-disobedience or the militant approach. The question that I will examine is how does the Kairos Document critique this approach, which it calls Church Theology?

3.2. A critical examination of the Kairos Document's view of Church Theology and Civil disobedience

The frustration felt towards the advocates of Church Theology as accused by the Kairos Document writers is felt when reading through this section. It is easy to conclude that the writers felt that the so-called English-speaking churches did not understand the seriousness of the situation. According to the Kairos Document peace cannot be genuine until the system of oppression is removed, and this would not happen unless the government repented and removed the system that had placed the minority white community in an advantageous position above others.

The Kairos Document states,

> The trouble with "reconciliation" is that in South Africa today there are not, morally and Christianly speaking, two sides to the story.

> There is only a wrong side, 'a fully armed and violent oppressor,' and a right side, people who are defenceless and oppressed. Therefore, it is "totally un-Christian to plead for reconciliation and peace" until the present injustices are removed (Kairos 1985:373).

The Kairos Document continues with a harsh rebuke of the advocates of Church Theology, as it classifies the summons to reconciliation as sin. The document states, 'It is asking us to become accomplices in our own oppression, to become servants of the devil. ... What this means in practice is that no reconciliation, no forgiveness and no negotiations are possible without repentance' (Kairos 1985:374). Thus Church Theology can be understood as a position that discourages all types of resistance against the state. The accusation of the Kairos Document is that this notion does not consider the possibilities of failed negotiations, but rather just pushes for meaningless dialogue. The Kairos Document, on the other hand, encourages the Christian communities to engage in civil (non-violent) disobedience. This position is presented, as it is accepted by the writers that they are in the right; they have a moral justification based on God's truth and his divine character.

The debate about civil disobedience existed even during the time of the Early Church. As we have examined the context of Romans 13, it is easy to imagine the debate early Christians had regarding the relationship of the Church and the state, even more so when the state became increasingly oppressive towards the believers. Since the fall of Nazi Germany, it has been more accepted within certain Christian communities that civil disobedience is acceptable, but in certain situations.

Geisler (2006:440) presents two general views in support of civil disobedience; when the government promulgates a law in contrast to the Word of God, and when the government commands believers to do evil.

Regarding the first point, the issue of justice has been discussed and concluded that justice and morality are founded on the basis of God's divine truth. Thus, the government ought to implement God's law and truth in society. The Kairos Document argues that the oppressive system of apartheid not only violates God's word, but is unjust. In addition, one may argue that the law or legislation that enforces the separation of facilities, forces Christians to do evil. Store and restaurant owners are forced to discriminate against people of other races, and the Kairos Document points out that "Christian soldiers and police shoot and kill Christian children" (Kairos 1985:373-374). The concept of unity in Christ expressed in the Gospels and the epistles is consciously violated, even by those that profess Christ.

Geisler (2006:440) argues that the Bible tells us not only when civil laws ought to be disobeyed, but also how. Geisler argues for non-violent civil disobedience, not violent revolt. He states (2010:251) that biblical civil disobedience does not fight against the punishment of the state, but accepts it and gives the example of Shadrach, Mishach, and Abednego (Dan 3) and Daniel in the lions' den (Dan 6). Geisler also states that fleeing the state is an alternative form of disobedience, instead of fighting against it. He (2010:251) provides compelling reasons against revolt. First, God gave the sword to the government to rule, not to the citizens to revolt. Still on Romans 13, Geisler focuses on verse 4, that the government is the one to use the sword on the citizens and not the other way round. Second, God exhorts against joining revolutionaries. This point serves as a continuation of the first and Romans 13. Lastly, Revolutions are consistently condemned by God. On this, Geisler points to several passages in the historical books of the Old Testament, including Numbers 16 which records the Korah's rebellion against Moses. Geisler (2010:251) acknowledges that the revolt against queen Athaliah (2 Kings 11) was sanctioned by God, but argues that this was the only one, and was necessary to preserve the

only link to Christ's bloodline. Geisler's view corresponds with my biblical examination of Romans 13, but more so with Paul's instructions in Titus and Peter's in his epistle, if the later authorship date is adopted.

Philip Wogaman (2000:270) states that civil disobedience could be a tool for Christian witness in a context where the state implements destructive and immoral legislation, but Mark Kreitzer (2015:99–100), a professor at Grand Canyon University, argues that this could be done in an orderly manner without chaos. Kreitzer argues that God is not a God of disorder, and the Church should aim to maintain order. Kreitzer points to Jesus' attitude in the garden of Gethsemane when Peter wanted to revolt, and chastised him for his attitude (Matt 26:50-53). However the Kairos Document sees chaos as a necessary evil in dealing with the greater evil of oppression (Kairos 1985:383-385). Its defence of violence springs from what it considers an unfair comparison between the state's sanctioned violence against unarmed demonstrators and the reaction of the people by throwing stones and burning cars out of frustration (Kairos 1985:374–377).

I have three main criticisms of the Kairos Document's position on civil disobedience. The first is that the views of the authors of the document are based on emotions and sentiments, rather than on biblical grounds. They do not attempt to present a convincing biblical view of their position, but only the political realities they have witnessed. Emotion-based theologies without a strong biblical basis are counterproductive and could be disastrous. My examination of Romans 13, Titus 3 and 1 Peter 2, shows there is greater biblical support for a position contrary to what the Kairos Document advocates. Geisler (2010) and Kreitzer (2015) in their respective works provide a convincing biblical position of how the Church could deal with an oppressive government.

My second criticism is regarding the potential loss of life. I'm cautiously against the Church encouraging tactics that could result in the loss of innocent lives. It could be viewed as hypocritical, if the Church that has advocated pro-life policies consciously advocates tactics that could place many innocent lives in danger. This does not mean that Christians should obey the state for fear of losing their lives. Disobedience of the church by not implementing their policies, is different from advocating acts such as civil disobedience, especially violent disobedience.

The last criticism is its failure to openly condemn violence within the townships perpetrated among Black factional groups. It is logical to conclude that this is because the Kairos Document sees that as a symptom of the oppressive system of government, with its focus on police brutality, and not the black-on-black violence. Nonetheless, the defence given is not acceptable, as it could be seen as the classical 'the devil made me do it' excuse, only that the devil is the state. It would have been advantageous and constructive had the authors of the Kairos Document called for the oppressed to take the higher moral ground and cease such acts. On the human level, one can imagine the anguish and pain when so many people lose their lives in their quest for *liberté, égalité, fraternité* meaning freedom, equality and fraternity (Kairos 1985:383–385).

4. Forgiveness and Reconciliation in the Kairos Document

One of the key issues regarding the Kairos Document is the issue of reconciliation. Can there be true reconciliation between the oppressors and the oppressed? What role does truth have in the reconciliation process? The Kairos Document authors painted a black and white, right and wrong, picture of the South African political and social scene. It is

logical to criticise even the portrayal of State and Church theologies as divisive and alienating. The Kairos Document offers only one condition for reconciliation; total repentance and reversal of the segregation policies. Botman (2000:105-120) points out that one of theological criticisms against the Kairos Document is that its understanding of reconciliation lacked future vision of how nations are formed.

This may be true when we look at political situations like the Israel-Palestine, and the South Korea-Japan tensions. The Kairos Document's version would not apply to the first situation, as both feel justified in their actions, thus neither one would relent and repent. In fact, is it appropriate to view the position presented in the Kairos document as idealistic; true from a theological perspective, but difficult to implement in institutional and political reconciliation process? An example of the latter situation concerns one nation that colonised another. If the former colonisers feel that they have done enough to apologise, if they ever did, any more demands lead to friction and clashes. It would have been more constructive if the reconciliation focused on both sides rather than just on one. In the modern world, reconciliation may require compromise by both parties.

Even though Botman may be correct in his critique, the problem is deeper than just providing a precedent for future conflicts. One of the areas that justifies criticism is its presentation of the white and black churches. The picture that the Kairos Documents paints is that the white Afrikaner churches were the sole supporters of the Apartheid regime and the English-speaking churches were silent supporters or critics of the regime. However, this ignores black churches that could fall under either the State or Church theology groups. One of the examples of such churches is the Zion Christian Church, the largest AIC church group in Southern Africa with membership in neighbouring countries such as

Swaziland, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Ashforth (2005:191) notes that the Zion Christian Church remained disengaged during the anti-Apartheid era. Ashforth gives the example of when the church invited State President P.W. Botha to its annual pilgrimage where thousands of its members from all over South Africa converged on its headquarters in 1985 before the final version of the Kairos Document was drafted. The failure to recognise the existence of black churches that fell under these criticised categories creates a biased presentation against specific targeted church groups.

My second critique is regarding its view on black-on-black violence. The conditions presented in the Kairos Document are based on the state and the oppressed, but it forgets the need for reconciliation among the oppressed, especially where the tensions are tribal. The political conflict between the African National Congress that, primarily, consists of the Xhosas and the Sothos, and the Inkatha Freedom Party of the Zulus, is well documented. Although it is difficult to find a firm estimate of the number of deaths between the two factions, the period between 1984 and 1990 was the most volatile (Sisk 2009:88). The approach by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1995 attempted to strike a balance by including in its investigations the black-on-black violence as well as acts perpetrated by the liberation movements. The Kairos Document fails in this essential task.

The Kairos Document presents a moral argument for the value of human life, the role of the government, and the responsibility of the Church in enforcing God's divine truth and justice. Although there will always be a debate on the Church-State relationship, the Kairos Document explored this issue under challenging circumstances. It maintains a general evangelical view of divine truth in its view of the role of the state under the lordship of Christ and pushes for the moral responsibility of the state and the Church. Cooperation between the

state and the Church is needed in ensuring a great life for all. Regardless of the weaknesses of the Kairos Document, the moral argument that it presents is essential and relevant in the contemporary context.

5. Conclusion

The Kairos Document serves as a moral voice of the responsibility of the state and the role of the Church in society. It focused on the question of what the Church should do where the state fails in its moral obligation to care for all its citizens, more so when the state is the oppressor. Its critique of State Theology is warranted, and its call for the Church to hold the state accountable for its duty to promote God's divine Truth and social justice is plausible. However, the document fails in not presenting adequate biblical support for civil disobedience and militant actions against an oppressive state. Romans 13:1–4, Titus 3:1 and 1 Peter 2:13 do not promote direct actions such as civil disobedience against the state, but call for peace and order. The actions of the early Church during persecution provide the best example of being an effective witness in an oppressive society.

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